



The Armor Conference, 1997 appellation, has come and gone here at Fort Knox. Some people not assigned to the Home of Armor have mistakenly thought that the end of the conference each year is the trigger for hibernation. They have believed that the sleepy TRADOC outpost of Fort Knox goes back into near dormancy until it is time to begin the spin-up cycle for the 1998 Armor Conference. They couldn't be more wrong. Who has time to slack off? The historic moment we serve in doesn't care one mil whether you are in FORSCOM, TRADOC, or a forward deployed part of the force. If you were here and heard the briefers at the conference, or if you are just a guy who keeps his ear to the ground listening to tremors, you already know this. You know just how busy is the task of armor and cavalry guys worldwide, no matter the locale of their current laager.

One of the facts about Fort Knox that most don't know is that the OPTEMO and ammunition usage here is higher than you would think. Some charts I saw in the Post Chief of Staff's office say it is equal to or greater than that of two heavy, active-duty brigades. That is a lot of miles and lots of bullets going downrange when you consider the mission here is training, mostly at the individual level. True, the place isn't bustling like in the late 1970's Armor Officer Basic days of my memory, but a backwater, sleepy Kentucky outpost? My aftcap!

While Fort Knox trains the men who today crew the squadron and battalion vehicles, it is also looking forward to determine what form the next iron steed will take. There is as much discussion of how it will look as on how we will employ it too. How long will we continue our incremental improvements of existing platforms? Are we really going to invest in and ride into battle a "leap-ahead" vehicle full of multiple pieces of emergent technology? To get us all thinking of these issues and some solutions to them, we have two articles in this magazine that attempt

to see into the hazy future, and I know you will find them stimulating. The magazine's lead article, on one vision of the future combat system, is the first installment of a three-part article that will conclude in the November-December issue. It demonstrates what kind of picture one can draw with a clever use of many open sources. The other article, by the Director of Force Development here at Fort Knox, postulates a new organization optimized to use the capabilities of the 21st century modernized force. Neither writer professes to know what the geometry on battlefields decades away will truly look like, but the assumptions they make seem plausible and will advance our thought.

Some of you may know naysayers out there who see future low- and mid-intensity battlefields as places where United States armored forces are anachronistic "Lost World" dinosaurs. They may be sincere in their beliefs, or they may have their own modernization agendas, such as trying to get bigger slices of the acquisition pie, but whatever the motivation, they are wrong. All of us Armor and Cavalry soldiers need to say so. Loudly. Repeatedly. In any forum that is appropriate. The lives of future soldiers, your kids, your grandkids, demand it. The article by LTC (Ret.) Eshel, "Armored Anti-Guerrilla Combat in South Lebanon," should provide you with enough high pK ammunition to silence those misguided people. The Israeli Defense Forces have found renewed faith in their armor during their border war with the Hezbollah. They have learned that armored vehicles and formations, rather than being leftovers, useless relics from the days of sweeping across the Sinai, are among the most essential equipment they have.

We, too, already know this, but we have to do better letting others who decide things like force structure and budget know, too. Enjoy the magazine.

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